



# Cobb Alternatives Analysis and Comprehensive Plan Survey Results

October 2011

Prepared for



*Cobb County...Expect the Best!*

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The Schapiro Group, Inc.  
127 Peachtree Street, NE – Suite 923 ♦ Atlanta, GA 30303  
404-584-5215 ♦ 404-581-0058 fax

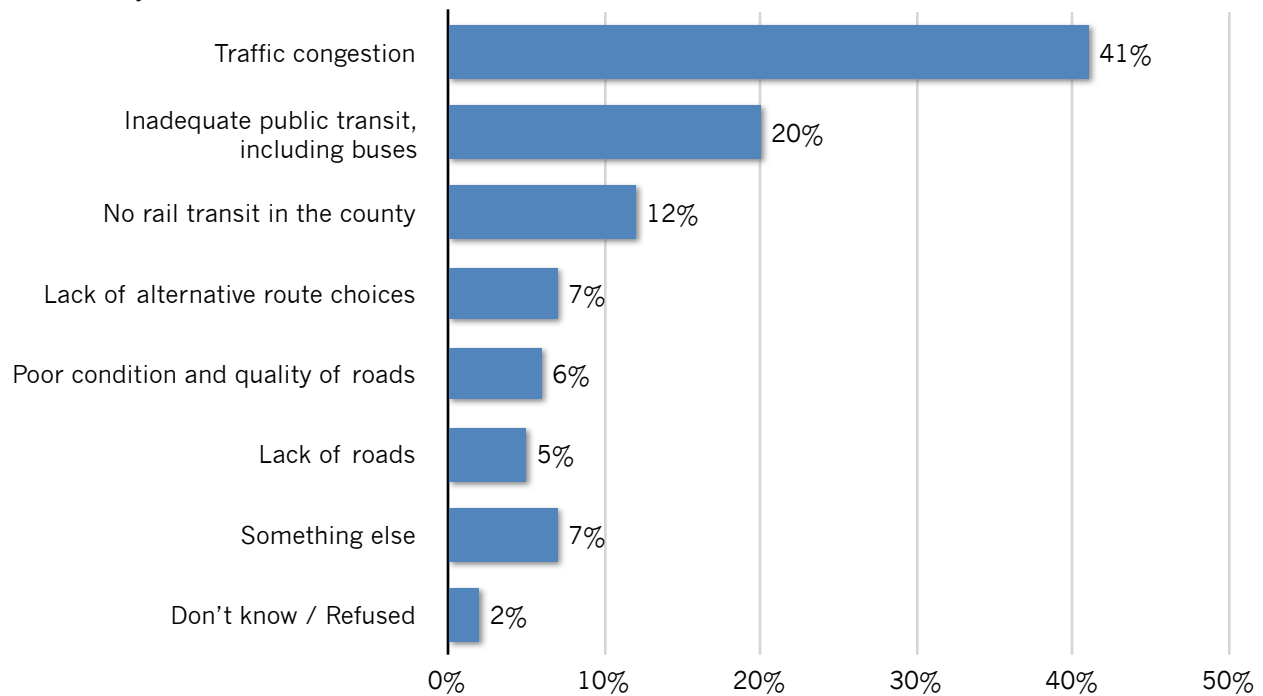
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## Alternatives Analysis

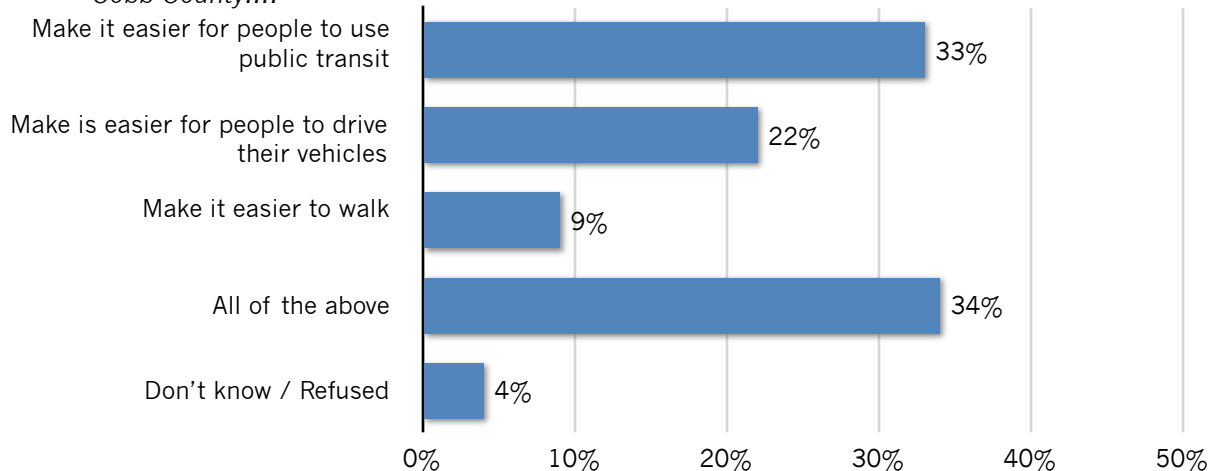
We started broadly by asking Cobb County voters what they believe will be the most significant transportation issues facing the county in 25 years. (Figure 1) Voters believe traffic congestion will be most significant, by a wide margin. Coming in second — and only half as significant as traffic congestion — is the issue of inadequate public transit options, including buses. No other issue was mentioned by even 15% of the respondents, and all items dealing specifically with roads were mentioned by less than 10%.

*Figure 1. What do you feel will be the single most significant transportation issue facing Cobb County 25 years from now?*



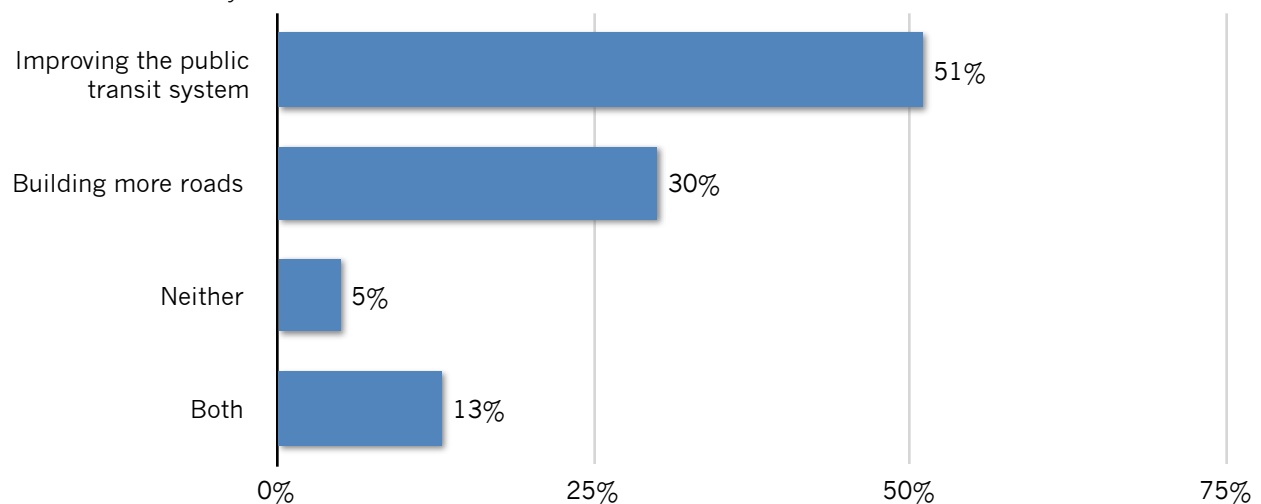
When asked what they would like the county government to do to make it easier to get to local destinations, one-third of respondents (33%) indicated that Cobb County should make it easier for people to use public transportation. (Figure 2) About one-quarter (22%) indicated the county should make it easier to drive their vehicles, and only 9% said the county should make it easier to walk to destinations. The greatest number of respondents (34%), though, indicated that Cobb County should work on improving all three — public transportation, driving, and walking.

Figure 2. Now I am going to read you three alternative directions to address Cobb County's transportation problems. To make it easier for residents to get to local destinations, should Cobb County...?



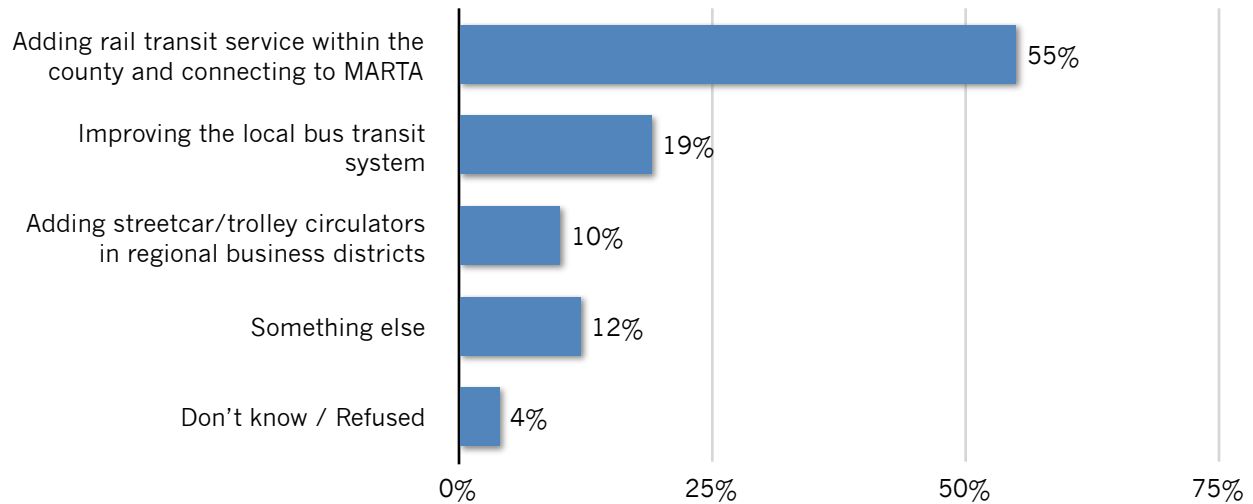
We next asked respondents directly about their preference between two specific possible strategies for improving transportation in the area: building more roadways and improving the public transit system. (Figure 3) A majority of voters (51%) considers improving the public transit system to be the more important of the two, while 30% believe building more roads to be the greater priority. Thirteen percent of respondents find them to be of equal importance, and only 5% don't consider either to be a priority.

Figure 3. County officials often have to decide priorities based on limited resources. If you had to choose, which is more important to you — building more roadways, or improving the public transit system?



Now, thinking only about improving the public transit system, we asked respondents what Cobb County should do to improve it. (Figure 4) By far the most preferred strategy is to add rail transit service within the county, and have it connect to MARTA (55%). Combined, the other tested strategies — improving the local bus transit system and adding streetcar/trolley circulators in regional business districts — received barely half the amount of support as adding rail transit.

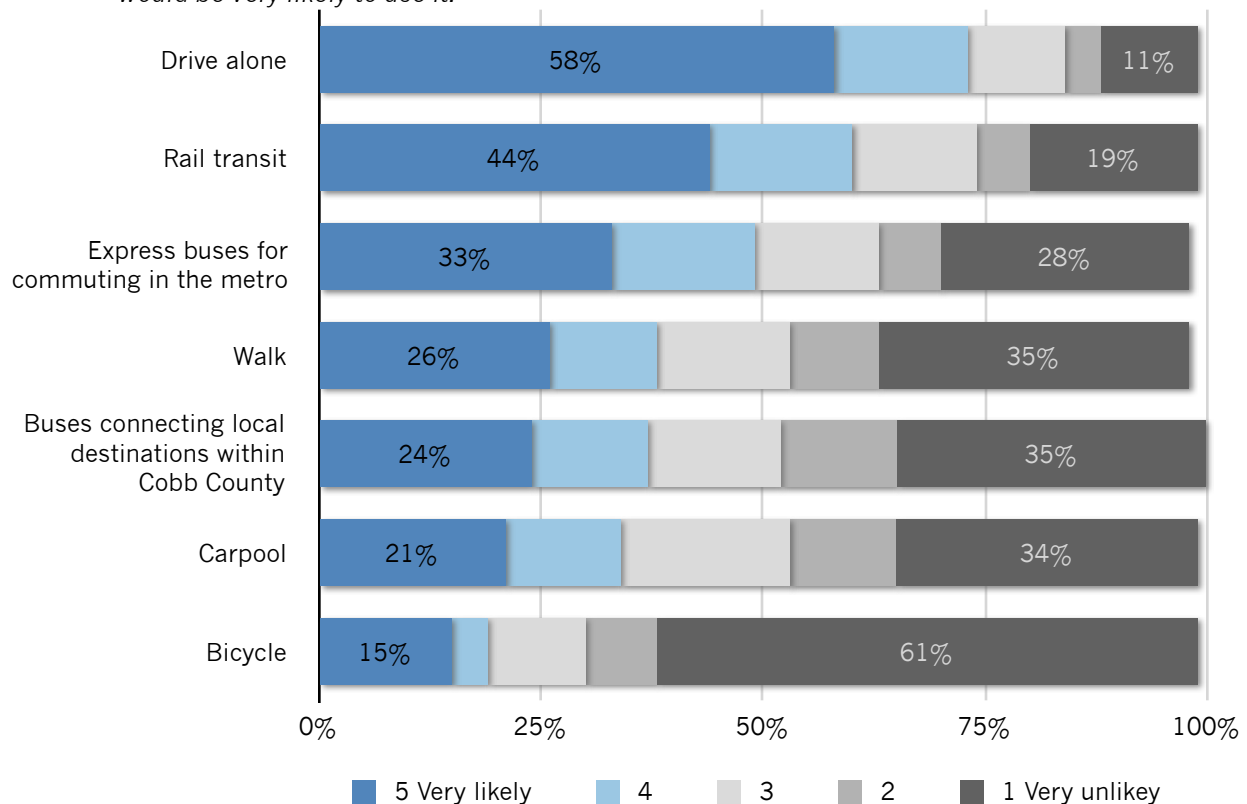
*Figure 4. Suppose the county was considering improving the public transit system. Would you prefer to improve the system through:*



## Comprehensive Plan

The first set of Comprehensive Plan questions also covered transportation issues. Cobb County voters are more likely to drive alone than to take any other form of transportation when it is convenient. (Figure 5) A majority of respondents indicate they would, in fact, be *very* likely to drive to a destination if it was convenient, and this is the only option that received an average score over 4 (4.07). Following behind driving alone, with an average score of 3.48, is rail transit. No other options had a majority of respondents giving a score of 4 or 5, and the only other option to average above a 3 is express buses (3.08). Voters are particularly unlikely to ride bicycles to destinations (average score=1.98).

Figure 5. On a scale of one to five, how likely would you be to use the following means of travel if they were convenient? A one means you would be very unlikely to use it, and a five means that you would be very likely to use it.



The next bloc of questions asked about a myriad of issues facing local government, most of them not directly related to transportation. The most important are presented in Figure 6 below. Each of these issues is considered very important by at least half of the respondents, and, as it turns out, two of the top three issues deal with transportation: decreasing traffic congestion and improving commute times.

Figure 6. Now I'm going to list several issues facing local government and I'd like you to tell me, on a scale of one to five, how important each one is to you. A one means that the issue is not important to you, and a five means the issue is very important.

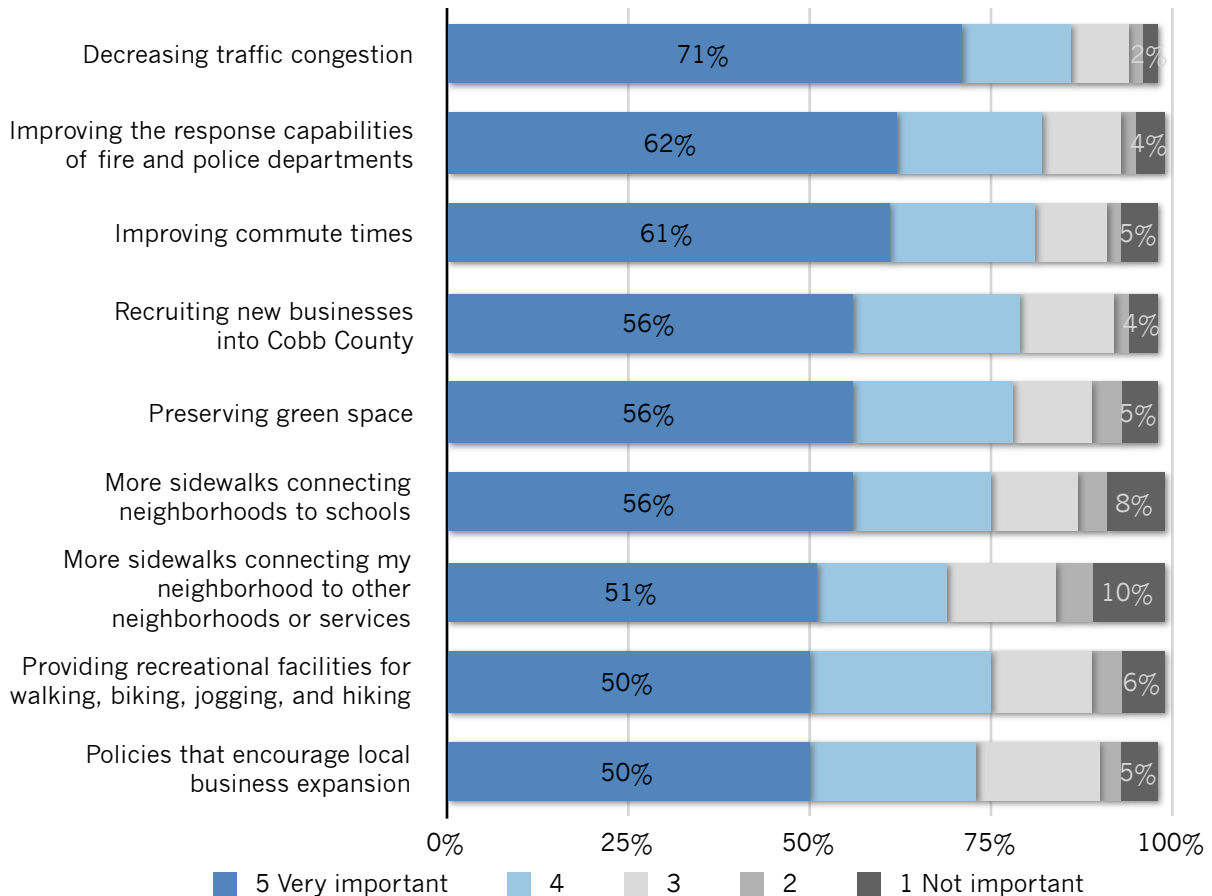
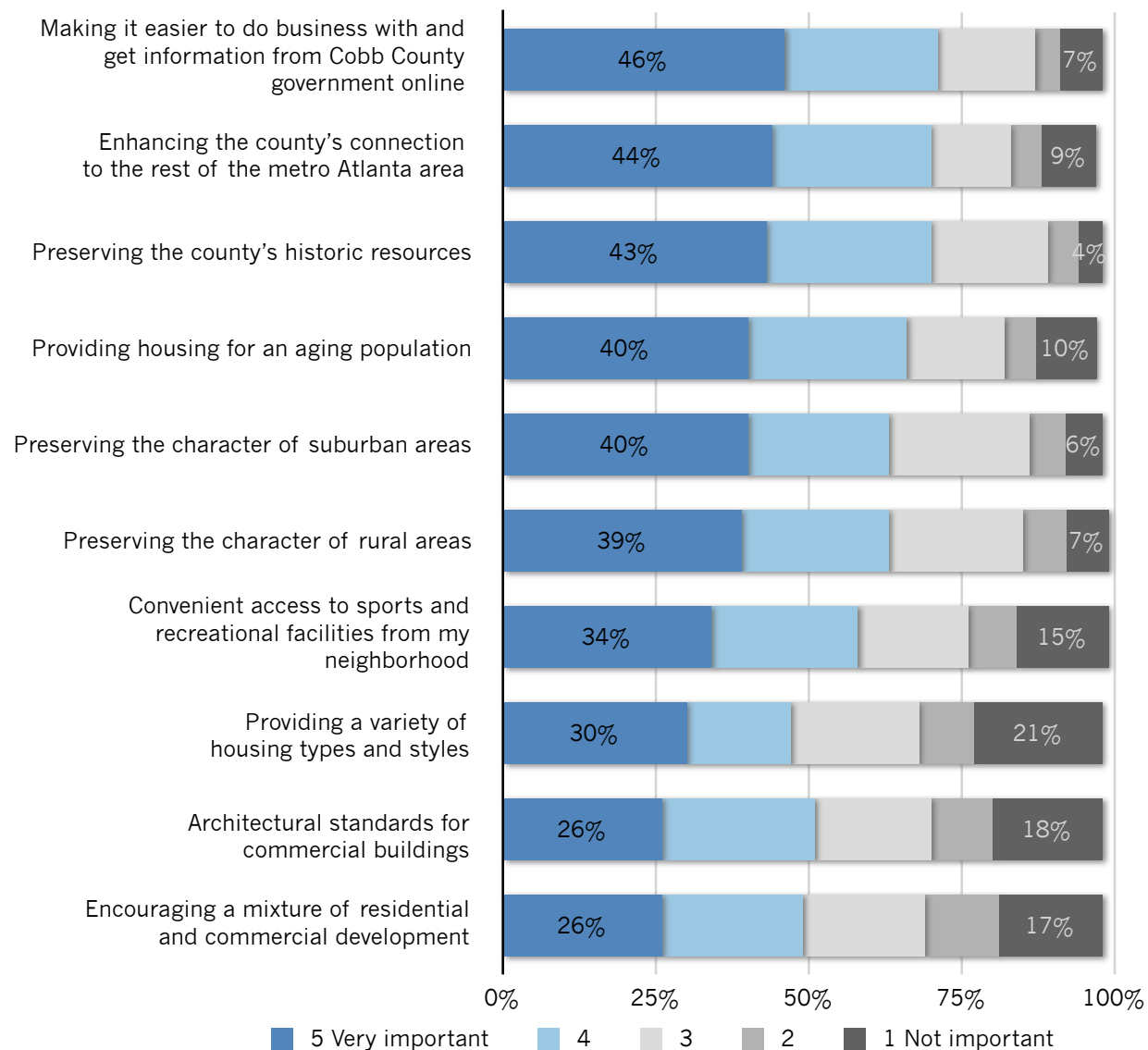


Figure 7 displays the the rest of the issues, which are slightly less important than the above issues, though a majority of respondents still rated all but two of them either a 4 or a 5 in importance. Looking in particular at voters' preference for the character of the county, preserving the character of rural areas received an average score of 3.88, nearly identical to preserving the character of suburban areas (3.92) and enhancing the county's connection to the rest of metro Atlanta (3.89).

*Figure 7. Now I'm going to list several issues facing local government and I'd like you to tell me, on a scale of one to five, how important each one is to you. A one means that the issue is not important to you, and a five means the issue is very important. (Figure 6 continued)*

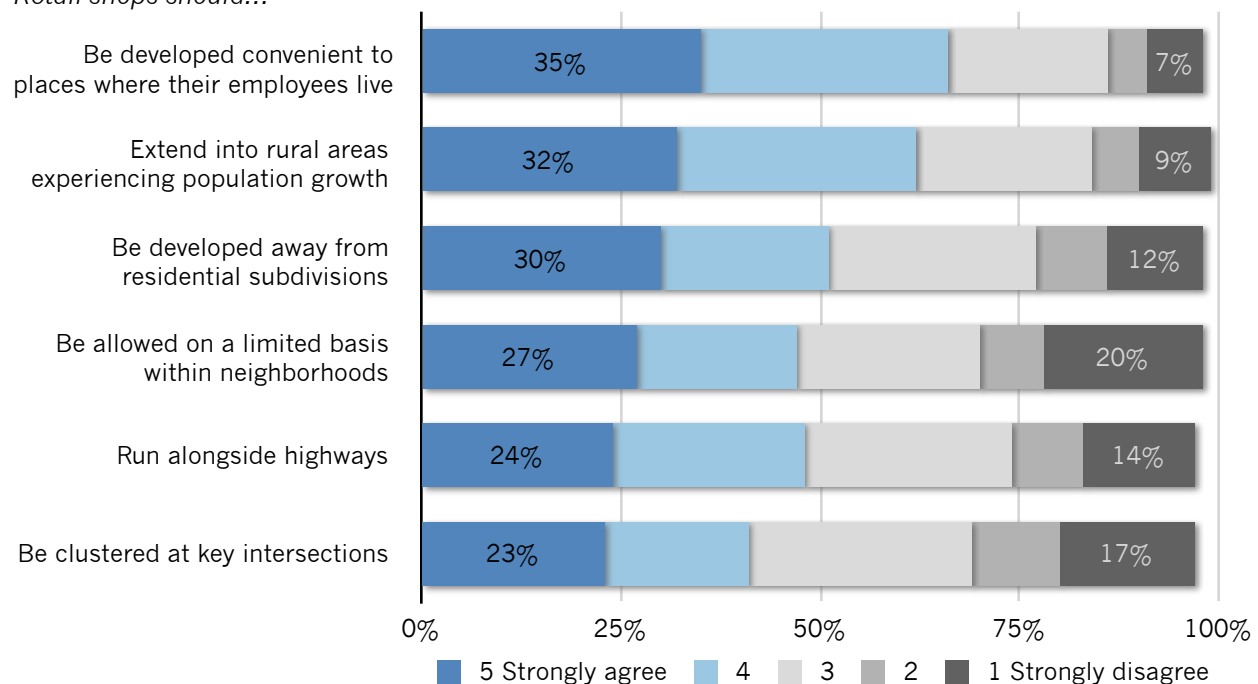




We next asked voters about their preferred location for retail shops. (Figure 8) Respondents are most interested in developing retail shops in locations that are convenient to where their employees live, and extending them into rural areas that are experiencing population growth. One item that stands out is allowing retail shops on limited basis into neighborhoods; one out of every five voters strongly disagrees with this implementation strategy. Otherwise, little separates the different items — there is only a 0.55 difference in average score of the most agreed upon item and the least.

Figure 8. Now I'm going to read you a few statements, and I'd like you to tell me how much you agree or disagree with each one, on a scale of one to five. A one means you strongly disagree, and a five means you strongly agree.

Retail shops should...

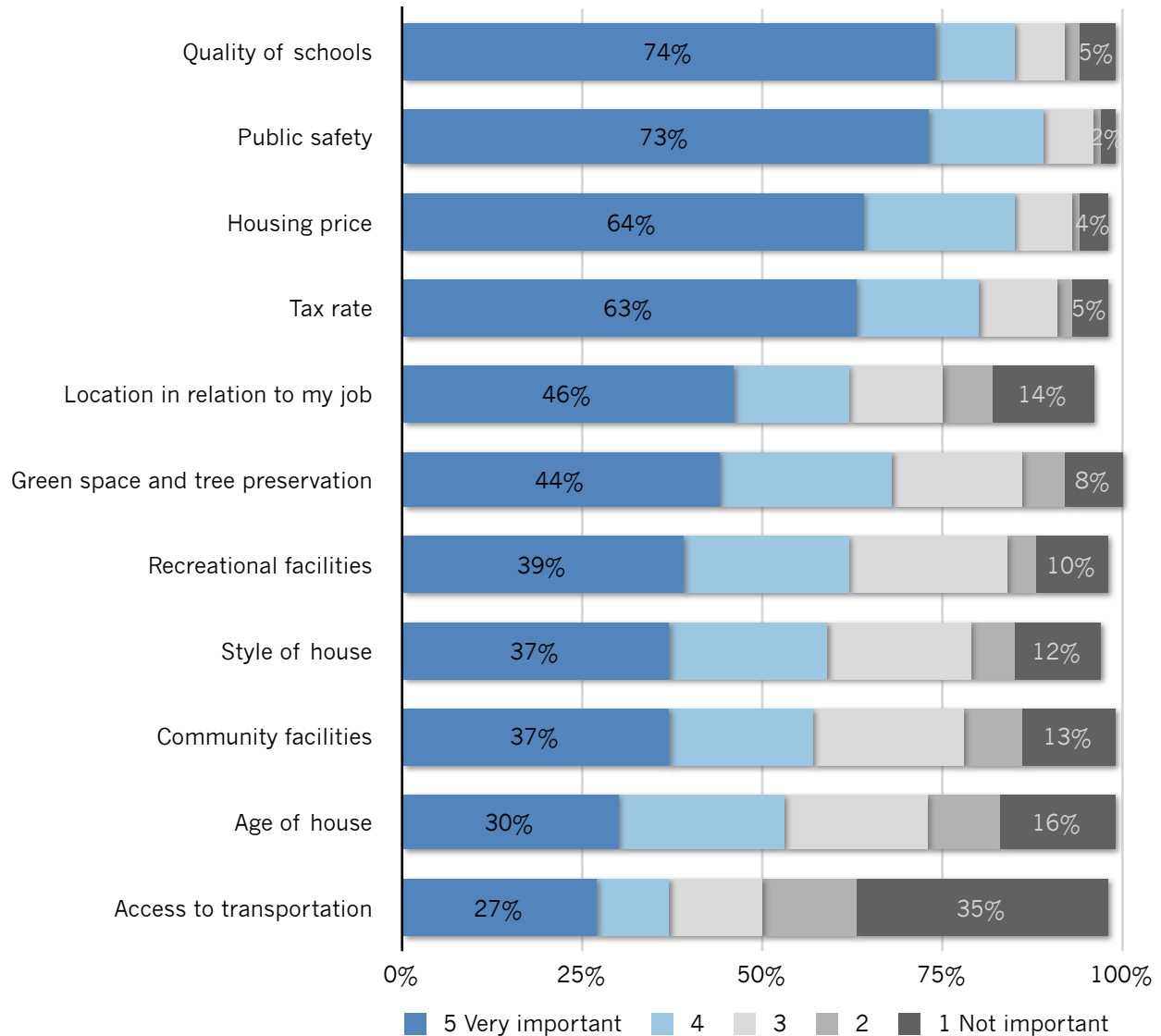


Finally, we asked Cobb County voters about what factors went into their decision to choose their neighborhood. (Figure 9) The two most important factors are the quality of schools and public safety, with nearly three-quarters of voters indicating those were very important considerations. Housing price and tax rate follow close behind.

One noticeable finding is that access to transportation rates last among the tested items — by a long-shot. Thirty-five percent of respondents said that this was not an important factor in choosing their neighborhood. This seems to fly in the face of the findings above that many residents have a strong desire for expanded public transportation in their area. There are two likely reasons. Access to transportation could simply be lower on residents' list of priorities, and they are willing to sacrifice it when they can find all of their other priorities in their chosen neighborhood. Or, since the question asks specifically about how they chose their neighborhood *in Cobb County*, it presumes that they had *already* chosen Cobb County as the county in which they would like to live. And, because the county does not have an extensive public transportation system (at least when it comes to rail), access to transportation *could not* be a consideration when choosing their neighborhood

there. It is clear from the results of the earlier questions, though, that there is now a great deal of desire for more public transportation options.

Figure 9. In choosing your neighborhood in Cobb County as a place to live, how important were each of the following to you on a scale of one to five. A one means it was not important, and a five means it was very important.



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## Summary

- ❖ When thinking about future transportation issues in Cobb County, voters are most concerned about traffic congestion. The second most significant issue is inadequate public transit, including buses.
- ❖ Respondents want to be able to get to local destinations more easily by any means they choose, including driving alone and walking, but they are particularly interested in making it easier to use public transit.
- ❖ If the county chooses to improve the public transit system, voters' preferred method is to add rail transit service within the county and connecting to MARTA.
- ❖ Respondents are most likely to drive alone when it is convenient, and rail transit was the second most popular method.
- ❖ There are many issues that are quite important to voters in Cobb County. Two of the top three deal with transportation: decreasing traffic congestion and improving commute times. Some of the other most important issues are improving the response capabilities of fire and police departments, recruiting new businesses into the county, preserving green space, and more sidewalks.
- ❖ Voters are most likely to prefer retail shops be developed in areas that are convenient to where their employees live and extend into rural areas that are experiencing population growth.
- ❖ The most important factors in choosing a neighborhood in Cobb County are quality of schools, public safety, housing price, and tax rate.

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## Methodology

In October 2011, The Schapiro Group (TSG) conducted a scientific telephone survey of 733 Cobb County voters to explore their opinions on transportation options and other issues affecting their community. The overall results were then weighted and are demographically representative of the county. The margin of sampling error for the countywide results is  $\pm 3.6\%$ .

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## Demographics

Figure 10. About how many total miles do you drive daily on your commute to and from work?

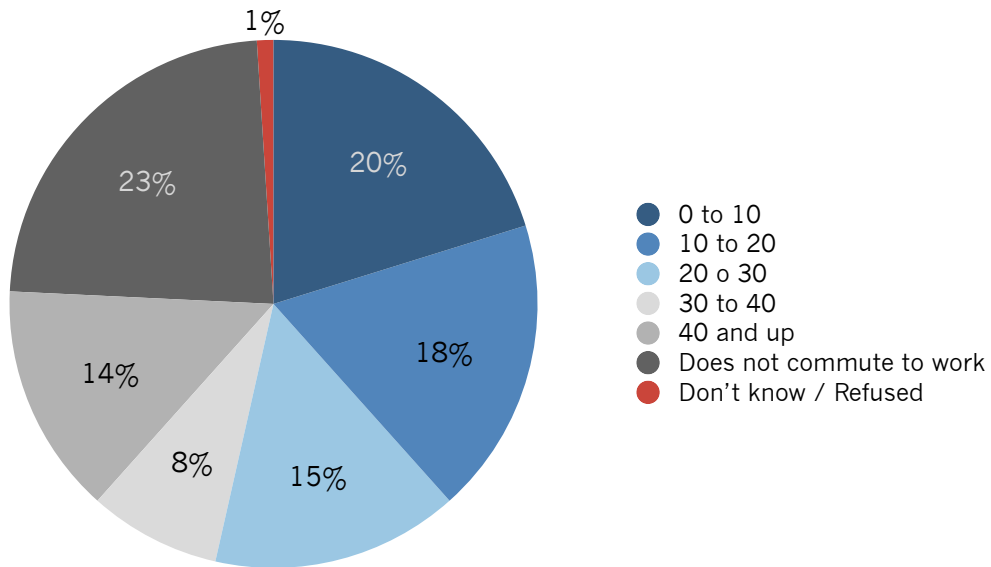


Figure 11. If commutes to work: How often do you drive on I-75 or US-41 as part of your commute?

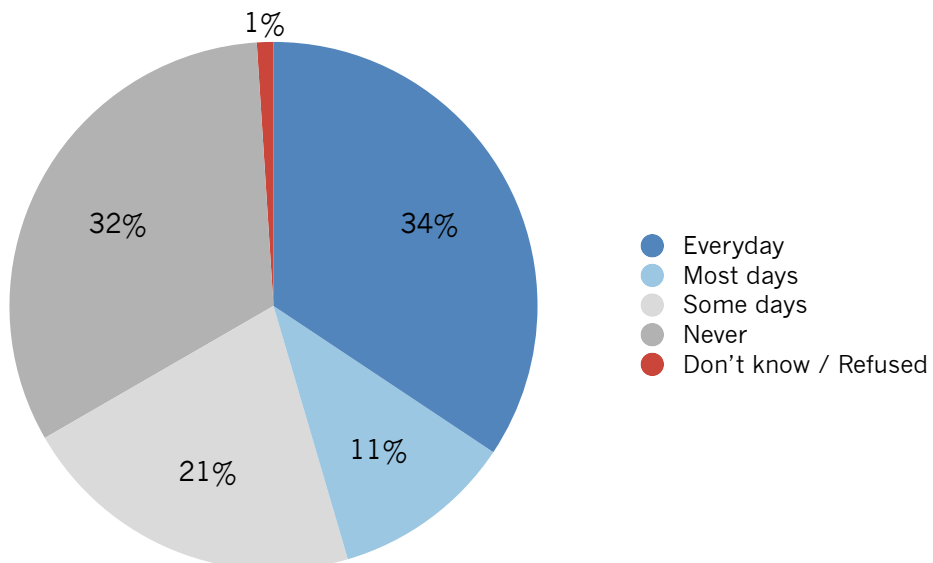


Figure 12: Political Party

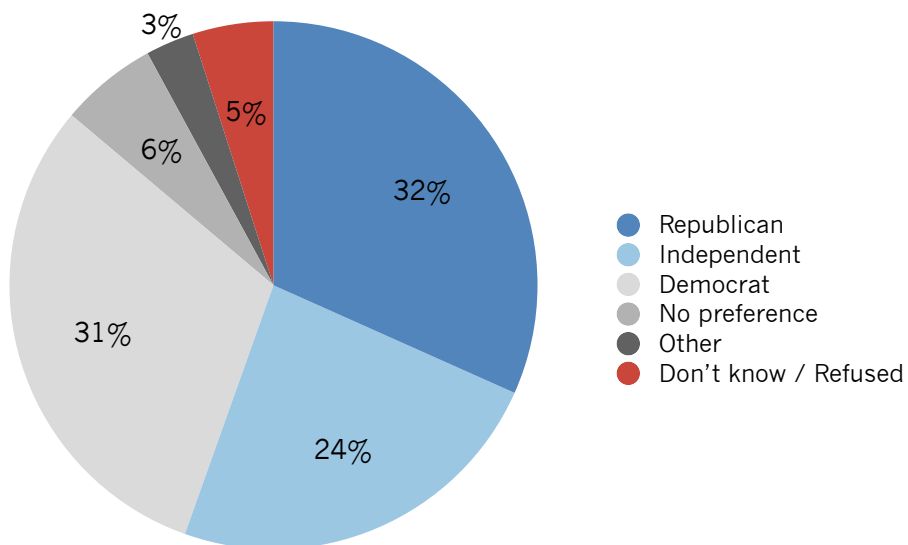
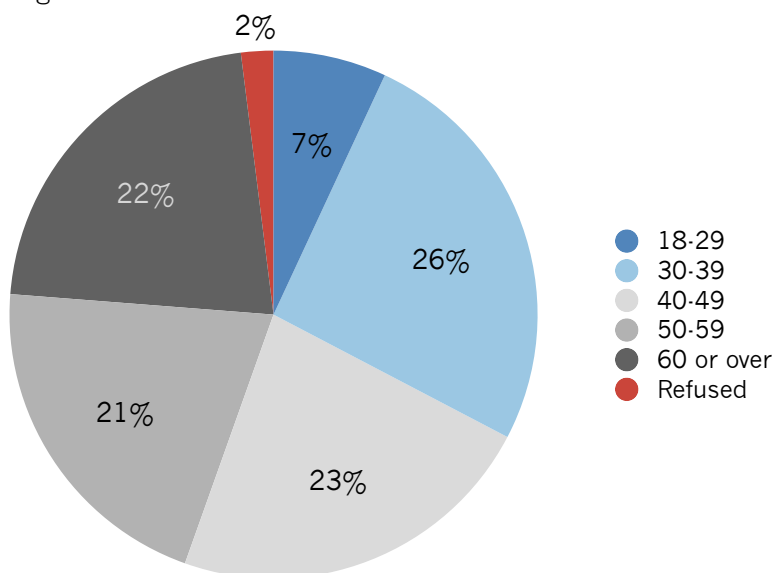


Figure 13: Age



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Figure 14: Gender

